

21st Century American Service Act

Seeking to address the rising costs of higher education and tap into the underutilized desire of young Americans to give back to their country, Congresswoman Duckworth's *21st Century American Service Act* establishes a 100% voluntary, uniquely American national service program that turns away no one wishing to serve while helping those who choose service afford higher education. This legislation would guarantee *all* young Americans – regardless of race, ethnicity, income or background – an equal opportunity to participate in national service.

Specifically, the Duckworth *21st Century American Service Act*:

- Establishes a 21st Century National Service Program within the Corporation for Community National Service (CNCS) that will enhance and expand service opportunities;
- Strengthens the value of the educational award Americans can earn through service to their country through the inclusion of Congressman John Lewis' (GA-05) **Segal AmeriCorps Education Award Tax Relief Act** (H.R. 4949). Congressman Lewis' provision excludes educational awards earned through AmeriCorps service from taxation.
- Establishes a statutory goal that CNCS will ensure any eligible young American who volunteers to dedicate a year to service between age 18 and 30, will be provided an opportunity to serve in a high quality, AmeriCorps civilian service program;
- Ensures every eligible young American, upon reaching age 18, is provided information on how to participate in AmeriCorps, Peace Corps or Military Service on a biannual basis until age 30;
- Creates an implementation task force to make sure the creation of the 21st Century National Service Program is carried out in an effective, efficient and transparent manner;
 - This task force is directed to specifically address how our nation can expand national service opportunities, promote bridge-year service learning programs, such as the visionary Tufts 1+4 program, and leverage national service to help military Servicemembers smoothly transition to civilian life;

The bill also includes an innovative national service college compact pilot program that will increase college affordability. The pilot program would feature a diverse set of State-based national service initiatives that allow participants to attend public institutions of higher education in exchange for completing two years of national service and one year of employment in a public sector or non-profit position.

By helping make college more affordable and making civilian national service more inclusive and universal, the *21st Century American Service Act* will strengthen civic engagement, promote national unity and foster a sense of shared sacrifice among all Americans.